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SUBJECT: CODEL NELSON CALLS ON MINISTER, MEETS ELECTION
OFFICIALS

¶1. (U) Senator Bill Nelson called on Ghana's Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, Abraham Ossei-Aidooh, on December 14 to congratulate the Minister and the Ghanaian people on their recent successful presidential and parliamentary elections and to assure the Minister of continued U.S. support for Ghana as it claims its rightful role in the community of democracies. Senator Nelson was accompanied by his wife Grace Nelson, Ambassador Don Teitelbaum, the Senator's legislative assistant Greta Lundeborg, Caroline Tess, his designee on the Intelligence Committee, and Captain John O'Brien, the Marine Corps military escort.

¶2. (U) Minister Ossei-Aidoo and Senator Nelson covered a wide range of subjects, including the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), the Millenium Challenge Agreement, and military and counter-narcotics assistance being provided to Ghana by the United States. Discussions included some of the similarities between the U.S. Congress and Ghana's Parliament, and the question of how Parliament plans to address the issues it will face as it seats its first legislative body without a single-party majority.

¶3. (U) Ossei-Aidooh thanked the Senator for his words of encouragement for Ghana's democratic elections, and asked him to help Ghana protect its nascent democracy by providing a fair balance in the economic marketplace. He said that Ghana was losing jobs and closing factories because of cheap imports that were flooding its markets, and lamented that the country was unable to compete with the efficiencies and competitive advantages of Western nations. What good is democracy, he asked, if we cannot provide jobs for our people?

¶4. (U) Sen. Nelson and the Ambassador told the Minister that many of the issues he was raising about Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) involved the European Union and not the United States. Approximately 98 percent of the goods entering the U.S. from Africa do so duty-free, and great strides have been made under AGOA and other trade agreements.

¶5. (U) On the subject of Ghana's next Parliament, Ossei-Aidoo, who did not stand for reelection as an MP, said that a Parliament without a majority would indeed be a novelty for Ghanaian politics, and that it was hard to tell at this point in time how well Parliament would function under this new regime. He said that he preferred full separation of the executive and legislative branches, where no ministers were appointed from Parliament and MPs concentrated on lawmaking.

¶6. (U) On Sunday evening the Ambassador hosted a dinner in honor of Senator Nelson, attended by his delegation and key members of various non-political organizations who had contributed to making the December 7 elections a resounding success. Among those attending were the Deputy Chairman of the Electoral Commission, members of Ghana's Center for Democratic Development and the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers, the Carter Center, the European Union Election

Observation Mission, and the National Commission for Civic Education. Sen. Nelson warmly congratulated all of those involved on their successful endeavors, and encouraged them to continue their efforts on December 28 when the country goes back to the polls for the runoff presidential elections.

17. (U) This message has been cleared by Codel Nelson.
TEITELBAUM